



Brigadier General Joseph Whitlock

**Independence Day Celebration
Ambassador's Residence
Nassau, The Bahamas**

Thursday, 3 July 2014

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. On behalf of GEN Jacoby I'm honored to be here with you to celebrate our Independence Day.

I extend my heartfelt appreciation to the United States Embassy for organizing this event, and my gratitude to our Bahamian partners for joining us here tonight. Culturally America has a long tradition of celebrating our independence with friends and allies. This is especially true when we find ourselves outside the United States.

Tonight, with our Bahamian partners, and tomorrow at home and all around the world, Americans will celebrate our 238th year of independence. When we look at the context of the signing of our Declaration of Independence, we recognize the bravery of the 56 members of the Continental Congress. Our forefathers were so convinced of the ideals of liberty and democracy, they effectively agreed to challenge the world's most colossal empire since ancient Rome. This Congress was undoubtedly aware that no colony had ever successfully left their 'mother' country and established a viable nation. Militarily, they also knew that the odds of successfully defeating the world's most powerful Navy were laughable at best.

Nonetheless, that Congress pledged their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor to form a new nation.

The audacity to “DECLARE” independence, while noble and romantic today, was likely a hand-wringing decision, made even more difficult by a hot summer day. As it turned, it would take seven more years to gain our independence.

Today, we celebrate more than the United States officially becoming a country. We celebrate the values the country was founded upon. Tonight, with you, our dear Bahamian friends and partners, we celebrate the many blessings of liberty we enjoy as citizens of free nations.

For members of the military, this holiday has special meaning. We have the privilege to serve our country, to champion and defend the high ideals so bravely articulated on that hot summer day so long ago.

And I consider myself luckier than most because I am fortunate enough to celebrate this important day here in The Bahamas once again, amidst the unmatched hospitality and beauty you are famous for.

But more important than your hospitality and the beauty of your country, USNORTHCOM is fortunate to have a partner so committed to defense and security. Your recent investment in the expansion of the Royal Bahamas Defence Force fleet through the Sandy Bottom Project is as timely as it is impressive.

Since the creation of United States Northern Command in the wake of the September 11th terrorist attacks of 2001, we have become more engaged in our own hemisphere, with our close friends and neighbors - by land and by sea. We know how important it is to work closely with our friends and allies to confront the security challenges common to all of us. This engagement is so important that General Jacoby's number one priority for United States Northern Command is to expand and strengthen our trusted partnerships.

In this regard, The Bahamas remains the leading regional voice and our most relied-upon partner in the Caribbean Region. And while we may be here today to celebrate the United States' Independence, I can't help but think of the significance of The Bahamas' own independence celebrations next week. Truly, The Bahamas is more than our stalwart defense and security partner and our neighbor; we are brothers, both born and independence gained from the same mother.

In the spirit of our brotherhood of independence, I say God bless The Bahamas, God bless the United States of America, and God bless our continued partnership. Thank you.